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28 NOV 1973

The Honorable Stuart Symington
Acting Chairman, Subcommittee on
Central Intelligence
Armed Services Committee
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Senator Symington:

I appeared before your subcommittee on 6 November to discuss recent developments in the Middle East and the Soviet involvement. In the course of my presentation several questions were asked which I could not fully answer at that time. I asked the Central Intelligence Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency to prepare responses to your questions.

The Defense Intelligence Agency has prepared a briefing for the Senate Armed Services Committee on the results of our exploitation of captured Soviet equipment and a comparison of them with similar U.S. weapons. The Defense Intelligence Agency will discuss the questions listed in Enclosure #1 in the course of their briefing which is, I understand, scheduled for this week.

The Central Intelligence Agency has prepared written responses to the remaining questions contained in Enclosure #2.

Sincerely,

/s/ W. E. Colby

W. E. Colby

Enc. (2)

cc: D/DIA
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Enclosure #2

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Questions for CIA Response to Committee

a. Question

[Redacted]

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Answer

[Redacted]

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[Redacted]

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b. Question

Senator Jackson asked when did the Soviets learn of the Arab decision to begin the war?

Answer

There is no convincing evidence that Moscow was involved in the planning of the Arab attack or that it encouraged it. Instead, in the months prior to the war, Moscow was concerned mainly to prevent further deterioration of its position in the Middle East. Throughout the year following the expulsion of Soviet forces from Egypt in July, 1972, Moscow made substantial arms shipments to the area, particularly to Syria. A study of Soviet shipments over three, three-month periods prior to the war, however, shows no sudden upsurge:

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Likewise, there is nothing in the pattern of Soviet air or sea resupply operations after the war began to indicate they had been set in motion before 6 October.

The weight of evidence strongly suggests it was not until late September that Moscow learned that Egypt and Syria were considering the initiation of hostilities. Several reports

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indicate that about this time President Sadat outlined his intentions to the Soviets and requested their reaction to the "theoretical possibility" of an Arab-initiated war. The Soviet Ambassador reportedly responded that Moscow did not believe the Arab forces were ready for war.

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Over the last few days of September and the first few days of October, the Soviets undoubtedly accumulated further evidence from their own sources in Egypt and Syria that hostilities were definitely planned. By 3 October the Kremlin thought the prospect for hostilities sufficiently serious to evacuate Soviet dependents from Syria and Egypt. That evacuation, by a hastily arranged air and sealoift, began the next day.

Other Soviet actions between 3 and 5 October, including naval movements and stepped up intelligence collection, showed that Soviet concern was rising rapidly.

on 5 October the Soviet leaders expected war could come at any time, although they were apparently told of the precise time of the attack by the Arabs only a few hours before it began.

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e. Question

Senator Jackson asked about the capability of the Suez Canal to accommodate size and type of ships.

Answer

When the Suez Canal was closed in 1967, it could accommodate vessels with 38-foot drafts -- adequate for dry cargo ships and tankers up to 50,000 DWT fully loaded or ships up to 150,000 DWT in ballast. This improved operational capability stemmed from completion in early 1964 of the first two stages of the "Nasser Project", begun in 1958. Work on the project's last stage, which would deepen the Canal to 40 feet, was far from complete when the Canal was closed.

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f. Question

Senator Jackson asked how long it would take to clear the Canal once such a decision was made.

Answer

We estimate that the Canal probably could be restored to its pre-1967 operating capacity in about six months at a cost of some \$40 million, excluding the repairs to associated installations. The cost estimates include \$10 million for the removal of 14 sunken vessels, which could be raised during the first three months, and \$30 million for dredging costs. Costs could run substantially higher if larger quantities of equipment were employed to expedite the work.

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g. Question

Senator Jackson asked if the Soviets presently have naval infantry in the Mediterranean. Did they have naval infantry in the Mediterranean during the 1967 war? Have they deployed naval infantry elsewhere outside the Eurasian area?

Answer

We do not know if there was Soviet naval infantry in the Mediterranean at the outbreak of the Middle East fighting. The Soviets had two Polnocny class medium landing ships at Port Said, and these ships sometimes carry a nominal number (25-30) of naval infantry aboard. The two Polnocny's at Port Said left on 6 October and took part in the evacuation of Soviet civilians from Latakia, Syria.

We believe that the Soviets did send some naval infantry to the Mediterranean during the augmentation of the fleet. Naval infantry troops were sighted aboard two amphibious ships that came from the Black Sea in late October. We estimate that these ships carried a force of about 300-500 men.

The Soviets did not send naval infantry to the Mediterranean during the 1967 war, probably because of the short duration of the fighting. They began continuous deployment of naval infantry as part of the Mediterranean Squadron in July 1967.

Beyond the Mediterranean, the USSR has deployed landing ships with naval infantry outside Eurasian waters only to the western Indian Ocean and to Conakry, Guinea. The Soviet navy has sent individual landing ships to operate with its Indian Ocean squadron intermittently since late 1969. Individual Soviet landing ships have also operated, on a noncontinuous basis, on the Conakry station since 1970.

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